

# State of New Mexico

## CHILDREN, YOUTH and FAMILIES DEPARTMENT

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CABINET SECRETARY

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DEPUTY CABINET SECRETARY

October 31, 2019

Michael J. Nelson, Chair  
Shelley Bucher, Program Director

Dear Mr. Nelson and Ms. Bucher,

Thank you for the Substitute Care Advisory Council (SCAC) 2018 Annual Report. The Children, Youth, and Families Department (CYFD) truly appreciates the Advisory Committee and the Substitute Care Review Board members' extraordinary dedication to the children and families of New Mexico.

According to the FY18 Report, the SCAC reviewed 116 cases involving 235 children. Cases were reviewed in each CYFD Region and each Judicial District (see Appendix A). Reviews focused on the strengths of the case, concerns of the case, and recommendations specific to that case. As each child's experience is a priority to the Council, a certain threshold was not required to be met before a concern was noted in a case. In FY 18, the following areas of concern were noted when one or more of the Group had one or more of these experiences while in the custody of CYFD: Maltreatment, Placement Instability, Separation of Siblings, and Incomplete Case Management. This year was the first time the Council has been able to evaluate CYFD's procedures related to these noted concerns. Therefore the recommendations contained in the report are a beginning to address some of those factors influencing these concerns.

To reply specifically to some of the outstanding issues in the report:

Revise- 8.10.8.29 CASA and CRB and 8.10.8 NMAC PR..

- CYFD will work with Office of General Counsel to revise CYFD policies and procedures to address how information is provided to the Council, when it is due, and how the information is tracked to comply with 8.10.8 NMAC.
- The report recommends an "independent team review for cases in which there have been two previous investigations" and other guidelines and staffing for such cases. We currently have an executive order in effect that provides mandatory guidance on reviewing and staffing cases with three or more investigations similar to what is recommended in the report. Unfortunately, that type of review has shown no impact on repeat maltreatment or other positive outcome measures and, indeed, has resulted in a case backlog due to the inefficiencies inherent in such protocols. We believe that providing a differential response to families that have repeat referrals will lead to increased safety and child well being. We are currently working to pilot such a differential response for these families to provide intensive case management and supportive services, which we think will lead to better outcomes.
- We are happy to provide information about our strategic plan and how our initiatives, including implementation of Safety Organized Practice, is anticipated to roll out in the near future.
- We are currently working with the National Center for Youth Law to revamp our psychotropic medication protocols and practices. More information on this work will be forthcoming.

The Children, Youth and Families Department supports the SCAC reviewing cases more in-depth. It is hoped that this will continue to bring about meaningful and insightful recommendations for the Department's policies,

procedures, and practices pertaining to its foster care program and continued improvement in the sharing of information between the SCAC and the Department.

Thank you for allowing CYFD the opportunity to respond to the 2018 SCAC Annual Report's formal recommendation(s). If you have any questions regarding these responses or our other activities, please call me at (505) 827-8400. Thank you for your time and effort serving the children, youth, and families of New Mexico.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian Blalock". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized font.

Brian Blalock  
Cabinet Secretary